ADMINISTRATIVE - INTERNAL USE ONLY

THE RECORDS INFORMATION SYSTEM

(TRIS)

MISSION NEED STATEMENT

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The Office of Information Services

and

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APPROVED:

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Director of Information Services

8 JUN 1982

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I. INTRODUCTION

Records are of vital importance to the Agency. They are essential to both the intelligence and management functions of our employees. This paper explains the need for a standardized, computer-based records accounting system. The system, to be developed jointly by the Office of Information Services (OIS) and the Office of Data Processing (ODP), will be known as The Records Information System (TRIS). TRIS will benefit all Agency employees by providing a greatly improved method for records inventory and control. This paper includes a description of TRIS, an explanation of the problems it must solve, and the functions it must perform.

Throughout this paper the term "records" refers to all documents, files, maps, microforms, photographs, magnetic tapes and disks, and other media which contain information collected in the performance of Agency business. The term "records accounting system" refers to any information system used to identify, locate, or determine the status of records. The formation of the MI Career Sub-Group in 1980 has highlighted the need for uniformity in records accounting procedures and for standards related to the design of computer systems used and maintained by MI Careerists throughout the Agency. TRIS, which is intended to satisfy both these needs, will be a computer-based records accounting system managed by OIS.

TRIS will replace a variety of incompatible manual and computer-based systems in use today. The scope of TRIS will initially be limited to systems used by MI Career Sub-Group employees; it will not take in large-scale computer systems, like SAFE, which have a records accounting function but primarily perform other functions and are used by employees outside the MI Career Sub-Group. However, once TRIS is operational and has demonstrated that a single system can be used effectively Agency-wide, OIS intends to encourage other components to use TRIS instead of stand-alone systems of their own.

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II. BACKGROUND

In August 1980, OIS and the MI Career Sub-Group were established under the Deputy Director for Administration (DDA). The Director of Information Services is the head of the MI Career Sub-Group. MI Careerists occupy most of the positions in OIS as well as positions in most Agency registries outside the Directorate of Operations. OIS uses the following computer systems to identify and control records belonging to all Agency components:

ARCINS - Archives and Records Center Inventory System
DARE - Declassification and Review
DECAL - Declassification
FARMS - Forms and Reports Management
IP-LOG - Information and Privacy Log
RAMS - Records Center and Archives Management System
TSCADS - Top Secret Control Automated Data System

While OIS has been developing these systems, ODP has been helping several Agency registries build computer-based systems to control their records. These registries are located in the following components:

Office of the DCI
Office of General Counsel
Office of External Affairs
IC Staff
Office of the DDA
Office of Current Production and Analytic Support, DDI
Office of the DDS&T

In addition, the following components have requested ODP to build computer systems for their registries:

Office of Logistics, DDA
Office of Training and Education, DDA
Office of Scientific and Weapons Research, DDI
Office of Development and Engineering, DDS&T
Office of SIGINT Operations, DDS&T

It is apparent from the above that the Agency is making progress in automating the records accounting function. Nevertheless, because these systems were individually built, the variances in design have resulted in a lack of interoperability and redundancies in the data collected.

III. PROBLEM DEFINITION

OIS faces three problems related to the way records accounting systems have been developed:

- Redundant data collection among
  Agency components

- Retraining required each time
  MI Careerists are reassigned

- Incomplete information on records
  maintained in electronic form.

Since the establishment of the Agency in 1947, components have designed records accounting systems to satisfy their own information needs. Some centralized records accounting requirements have been established by components such as the Office of Security (for classified information control), the Office of Logistics (for mail management), and the Agency Archives and Records Center (for records retirement procedures). These centralized requirements have contributed a degree of uniformity, but there still are many differences in the way components account for records.

Individually designed records accounting systems raised few problems as long as they were maintained manually. But several years ago, when components began to key records accounting data into computers, the problem of redundant data collection surfaced. With manual systems, employees did not worry about transcribing information from a form to a logbook or an index card. But today, once data has been entered into an Agency computer, employees are aware of the duplication of effort when they must rekey the same data, and this is becoming more common as we build more computer-based systems. For example, at least one component keeps classified document accountability information in its own computer system. Periodically, the component reports its holdings to a central control point. It does this by manually typing information from the computer terminal display onto a special form. The form is mailed to the control point where operators key the data into another computer system. OIS believes the problem of redundant data collection is about to take on significant proportions as more and more components line up to automate their records accounting systems.

The second problem facing OIS pertains to the need for employee training in the use of automated records accounting systems. The MI Career Sub-Group is responsible for staffing many of the components which have, or will have, computer-based systems. It is the policy of the MI Senior Career Panel to regularly reassign employees in order to meet the needs of the Career Sub-Group and to promote the career development of employees. To the extent that components follow

different records accounting procedures and use different computer systems, the cost of training needed to facilitate reassignments will be increased. These costs will show up in the number of different courses needed, time spent in formal training, and time required for on-the-job training.

The third problem concerns an absence from existing systems of an effective way to inventory and control records maintained in electronic form. The thrust of records inventory and control today is directed toward paper or "hard copy" information holding media. With the increasing use of computers in all Agency components, MI Careerists responsible for records management must have access to information about records maintained in data processing and communications systems. They must know what is being collected, who is responsible for it, and how long it will be kept. An accounting system is needed which will provide MI Careerists with this information.

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IV. TRIS CONCEPT

A.   MAJOR OBJECTIVE

OIS is seeking to develop a single, Agency-wide, computer-based, interoperable records accounting system to support the work of employees in the MI Career Sub-Group. TRIS is envisioned as a network of subsystems, some supporting the information needs of a single component and others maintaining central data bases for the use of all participating components. TRIS should integrate all subsystems in a way that facilitates standardized records accounting practices and allows an uninhibited exchange of data.

B. GOALS

The primary goals of TRIS are:

* To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency
  of MI Careerists by providing them with a
  comprehensive data processing system
  to store and use records accounting data.

* To minimize duplication in the collection and
  maintenance of records accounting data by
  providing a system which allows the electronic
  exchange of data among system users.

* To minimize the amount of retraining needed each
  time an MI Careerist is reassigned by providing
  standardized procedures for records accounting.

* To establish an accounting system which will
  provide MI Careerists with information necessary
  to control records maintained in electronic
  form.

* To provide maximum security protection for all
  records accounting data by limiting user access
  to data on a strict need to know basis.

* To support the Agency Records Management Program
  by providing reports which accurately document
  records holdings.

C. FUNCTIONS

TRIS will provide users with an interoperable ADP system to store and process records accounting data--data describing records holdings and records transactions. TRIS will also provide users with a capability to exchange data electronically among components.

The records management functions which are now performed by MI Careerists, and which create the need to collect records accounting data, include:

Correspondence control
Classified document control
File folder tracking
Publications distribution
Forms management
Reports management
Release of records to the public
Retired records management

In addition, because paper records are being replaced by electronic media which are part of telecommunications and computer systems, TRIS must also provide its users with the capability to account for information stored in electronic systems.

D. SCOPE

TRIS will be used primarily by employees in the MI Career Sub-Group. The purpose of the system is to support the records accounting function of MI Careerists in OIS and components throughout the Agency. The MI Career Sub-Group staffs approximately 270 positions in roughly 35 components Agency wide. Some components already have computer-based records accounting systems which will be incorporated into TRIS; the others all perform records accounting functions and will eventually participate in TRIS.

There are a number of Agency components not staffed by MI Careerists that are very much involved in records management and records accounting. These components will need to interface with TRIS either by providing input data or by receiving output reports, or both. Non-MI components needing computer-based records accounting systems of their own may want to participate in the TRIS network in order to benefit from the automatic data transfer capability. The policy of OIS is to permit, and even encourage, such participation as long as these components agree to adopt and maintain TRIS standards.

E.   BENEFITS

Some components maintaining records accounting systems have begun
using computers because they offer several important advantages over
manual methods. The most important advantage is, that computers
provide quick response to a variety of queries against a data base.
In other words, better use can be made of the collected data. Other
advantages are improved quality control over the accuracy of the data
because of a computer edit checking capability, and easy creation of
duplicate files for system backup.

These benefits can be obtained from any well run ADP system. By
consolidating the computer-based records accounting systems used by MI
Careerists, the following additional benefits can be realized:

(1) Lower operating costs through reductions in
the data entry work required each time a TRIS
user receives records from another user. Once
descriptive data about records has been entered by
an originator, each recipient should receive that
data electronically, and should not have to key it
manually into his or her own accounting system. Once
data has been recorded in TRIS, it should be automatically
available to any participant in the TRIS network
having a bona fide need for it.

(2) Lower training costs through reductions in the
amount of training required each time an MI Careerist
is reassigned. A primary goal of TRIS is
to provide standardized procedures for records
accounting. To the degree that this is accomplished
there will be less need for on-the-job training
related to accounting procedures, and less need
for formal training classes related to the computer
system a component uses. All components participating
in the TRIS network will follow standard accounting
procedures and use the same computer system.

(3) Improved management control over records maintained
in electronic form through the establishment of accounting
procedures which will provide MI Careerists with information
on what is being collected, who is responsible for it,
and how long it will be kept.

(4) Another benefit resulting from TRIS relates
to Agency reorganizations. Reorganizations
generate a great deal of work for records managers
because responsibility for records must be trans-
ferred with changes in component functional
responsibilities. TRIS should reduce the
amount of work required in identifying the

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records involved and in updating each component's
accounting system with the appropriate transactions
because all components participating in the TRIS network
will be using the same system.

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V. CONCLUSION

Complete and accurate information on records holdings is essential to the conduct of Agency business. This paper explains the need for a computer-based records accounting system to support the records management responsibilities of the MI Career Sub-Group. TRIS is envisioned to be a network of subsystems in which standardized records accounting data is exchanged electronically among components Agency-wide. The need to build an interoperable, automated accounting system has been firmly demonstrated by the proliferation of separate and redundant automated systems which already exist without the ability to communicate electronically across component boundaries. TRIS will provide users with the capability to account for hard copy records as well as records maintained in computer and telecommunications systems.

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